

**Testimony in Support of S.B 284, AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.**

Dear Chairs Abercrombie and Moore, Vice Chairs Lesser and Leeper, Ranking Members Berthel and Case, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Logan George, and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 284 - An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status**. This bill would provide state-funded medical assistance to any child or young adult under the age of eighteen years of age, regardless of immigration status, whose household income does not exceed two hundred one percent of the federal poverty level, and who does not otherwise qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance 11 Program, or employer-sponsored insurance.

Connecticut's expansion of HUSKY last year to children ages 0-8 years was an important win for immigrants in the state, who have been predominantly challenged by the shortage of healthcare resources available to them. The passage of S.B 284 would expand this win by guaranteeing more access to programs like HUSKY that largely benefit low-income immigrant families and individuals. Undocumented immigrants without coverage must rely on health care safety net resources, such as public hospitals or community clinics, to access needed medical care. Despite serving as important access points, none of these resources is equivalent to having comprehensive health insurance coverage.

Data reported by the Migrant Policy Institute (MPI) estimates 30.1% of foreign-born, non-citizens in Connecticut have no health care coverage, an estimated 159,600 individuals. In the undocumented community, that number goes up to an estimated 52% uninsured rate or 53,000 uninsured undocumented individuals. Connecticut must recognize this staggering gap in equity if it hopes to lower the state's overall uninsured rate, especially during a pandemic that is impacting immigrants disproportionately. While the uninsured rate in Connecticut is roughly 5.9%, an estimated 52% of undocumented immigrants in our state are uninsured.

Connecticut's HUSKY Health Programs restrict applicants' eligibility based on immigration status. Currently, undocumented individuals (those who are not US citizens or green-card holders) and those who have held a green-card for less than 5 years are unable to qualify for HUSKY. For people at lower income levels, HUSKY is the best option because it removes the barrier of deductibles and copays. As such, expanding HUSKY for immigrants regardless of status would benefit low-income families and individuals who would otherwise not be able to purchase coverage. Numerous studies have demonstrated that children who have neither private health insurance nor Medicaid or any other public coverage receive fewer physician visits

overall, fewer visits for the care of chronic conditions, and fewer preventive health care services compared to insured children.

Not only do we have a moral responsibility to ensure all people in Connecticut have access to health care, but this bill would resolve the discrepancy of denying health care to individuals who pay taxes into the very system that provides this health care. Undocumented immigrants in our state pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year, 253 million into federal taxes, out of that 54.6 million goes into medicare and 207.4 million goes into social security according to a study conducted by the New American Economy. Undocumented taxpayers are contributing to the state's health programs, but their status makes them ineligible to access said state health programs. Currently, the federal government pays between 50% and 90% of the cost for health care services provided to eligible Medicaid enrollees in the form of reimbursements to the state, individual providers, and health facilities.

Advocates for immigrants argue that many undocumented residents pay both state and federal taxes, which help fund programs like HUSKY Health, and they should therefore have access to coverage. Connecticut's undocumented immigrant population has recounted stories of being turned away for lifesaving treatments and preventive services, encountering discrimination and racism while seeking health care, and fear of being arrested while trying to get help. This is highly unjust given that they pay millions of dollars in local and state taxes every year to fund the health coverage programs that they're excluded from.

In conclusion, I urge you to expand healthcare to the immigrant population because it would allow them to receive the preventative treatment they deserve, reduce the uninsured rate in Connecticut, and save the state money by decreasing uncompensated care costs. Connecticut can and should do better in promoting healthcare as a human right, rather than a commodity that only the wealthy can afford. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Human Services Committee so that more immigrants in the state are able to access and afford health care that they're in desperate need of.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Logan George  
New Haven, CT